

How To Do a Whole Earth Catalog

The masked man left behind a silver bullet. The people said, "We'd rather have a scribbled diagram," and they shot him with his silver bullet. Here's our scribbled diagram.

Researching

For us this consisted of three big jobs. 1) Encouraging an incoming flow of information— spontaneous research by the readership. 2) Scanning "the literature" for promising stuff. 3) Sorting the good from the bad.

1) The incentives we laid out for spontaneous suggestions were: reward of money (\$10 for published review, later \$10 for any used suggestion); reward of recognition (we published the name of the reviewer and suggestor, spelled as correctly as possible); reward of honor-by-association (to the extent that we kept valid high standards, and honored the famous suggestor no more than the teenage one); reward of doing a good deed (to be a noble conduit we had to stay clean); reward of return (to the extent that we gave good, people returned it).

2) "The literature" for us consisted of Publisher's Weekly, *Forthcoming Books in Print* (both from R. R. Bowker, source of all the basic cataloging information on books in the U.S.— I consider R. R. Bowker a major pillar of Western Civilization; they labor endlessly, invaluable, without bias and of course unheralded). *Science* (who lists all the books sent to them for review), *Scientific American* (the first national publication to notice us, by the way), *Popular Science* (for tools), and later our cooperative competition such as *Mother Earth News*, *Big Rock Candy Mountain*, *Canadian Whole Earth Almanac*, *Natural Life Styles*.

Other major sources: catalogs from the publishers, bibliographies in good books (especially when annotated), big book stores, especially *Kepler's*, friends' bookshelves, the Stanford and Menlo Park libraries, and our own bookshelves revisited.

At the beginning of the CATALOG I ordered copies of promising titles from the publishers at 40% discount on ABA's Single Copy Order Plan. After about a year of this MIT said we didn't really have to pay for review copies from them. After that we requested free review copies from all the publishers and usually got them, at least on new books. It took some self-policing to keep from requesting "review copies" that we just wanted to have. There are some built-in conflicts-of-interest in the reviewing business.

3) Sorting. Fuller calls it "tuning out everything that's irrelevant", and considers it the core activity of thinking. It is utterly unglamorous; it is shovelling shit by the mountainload. I never spent my time reading the good stuff— whose quality was usually evident in 2-3 minutes. I spent the yellow-brown hours reading the lousy books, digging past their promising facades to the hollow within. Some of these wound up in the stove, where their publishers belonged.

Sorting requires criteria for yes and no, and sets to sort within. By angelic good fortune I thought to spell out our criteria at the beginning on page one of the first CATALOG. The sets (the section headings, devised originally as a secondary definition of our contents) also held up surprisingly well. Both the criteria and the sets became well-worn handles on the otherwise wholly unmanageable mass of information that flooded in. They also helped preserve continuity during three years of gradually migrating values.

At the beginning of the CATALOG I imagined us becoming primarily a research organization, with nifty projects everywhere, earnest folk climbing around on new dome designs, solar generators, manure converters; comparing various sound systems, horse breeds, teaching methods... the only product-project we ever did was build a BD-4 airplane, and I felt guilty about that because of the big expense for low yield of information.

In fact we didn't do enough research. Not the studious kind. Of our staff of about 26, only 2 or 3 were ever engaged in active search for CATALOG material. It could have been much more and better, but it never got organized, probably because of prima donna failings on my part.

Reviewing

Usually I review a book before I read it. These are almost always shorter, pithier, more positive and useful reviews. You're approaching the book from the same perspective as the reader— unfamiliarity— and you're not apt to fall into imitation of the author's style or petty argument with his views, as critics do.

So, I review the book, enthusiastically, on what I know from its title, its subject, the author, my own experience, and a hasty glance at the pages. Then I look a little more deeply to see if the review is fulfilled. If not, I either rewrite the review or discard the book.

The quickest clues to the authority of a book are its illustrations and its back pages. Cheap shit editor's-idea books puff up their illustrations. If a book has a whole page devoted to a photograph of nothing, with a nothing caption and credit to some manufacturer for the photo, throw the book. Look for photographs that contain real information related to the text, and captions that multiply the use of the picture; or diagrams that deliver complex understanding simply. In the back of the book look at the bibliography. If it's absent, or inflated endlessly, or unannotated, or oddly limited, be suspicious. The bibliography is an easy way to compare the author's judgment with your own.

The CATALOG format for reviews includes excerpts from the book (for magazine or catalog). The excerpts should expose the book— convey quickly what's in it, and deliver a few complete ideas independently useful to the reader. I always attempt to gut the book with the excerpts, extract its central value. Really good books like *On Growth and Form*, or *Stick and Rudder*, or *Natural Way to Draw* will not be gutted; practically any line or picture in them can be used.

An ideal review gives the reader: a quick idea of what the item is, what it's useful for, how it compares to others like it, and how competent the reviewer is to judge. (This last is why I stopped having unsigned reviews— the reader gradually grows familiar with the weaknesses and strengths of the various reviewers.)

The horrible temptation in reviews is to show off rather than simply introduce the item and the reader to each other and get out of the way.

Editing

The operational word on the cover of the CATALOG is *access*. Ultimately that means giving the reader access from where he is to where he wants to be. Which takes work, work takes tools, tools need finding, and that's where we come in.

A good catalog is a quick-scan array of tools, where you can find what you want easily, with detailed information where you're interested.

Our attempt to fulfill these requirements led to use-based section headings (Shelter, Land Use, Communications, etc.), an alphabetic index, and page-theme layout.

On each page we try to have one graphic which "keys the page", tells with a glance what's there. The hardest thing we had to learn was providing simple clear demarcation between items— an unadorned line.

We publish considerable detailed information— fine print. Sorting among that is aided by a consistent code of type-faces (reviews are always "univers italic," access is always "teeny", *Divine Right* is always "bold teeny", and so forth). The IBM Selectric Composer makes this an easy matter. Still we're not as consistent as we should be.

In descending order of importance, our layout guidelines are:

accuracy
clarity
quantity of information
appearance

Glamorous white space has no value in a catalog except as occasional eye rest. I figure the reader can close his eyes when he's tired.

I keep coming back to the reader/user because that's who the editor represents. I've had to feel that my obligations to Portola Institute, to staff, friends, relatives, and to myself are all secondary. So are obligations to authors, suppliers, publishers, other editors. Usually there's no conflict, but when there is the editor has to see that the reader wins.

The editor's main mechanical task is determining efficient use of production time and page space. It's like spreading hard butter on soft bread, best if you cut the task into workable hunks and distribute them evenly.

I use McBee cards, one for each item, for rough editing. I know from looking at previous CATALOGS and the new material approximately how many pages should be in the, say, *Nomadic Section*— 61 pp. So I take the stack of McBee cards punch-coded for that section and break them down into categories— mountain stuff, car-stuff, outdoor suppliers, survival books, etc. Then those sub-piles are put in some sensible sequence. Then on a big table the cards are separated further into 61 little page-stacks, by pairs (the reader sees 2 pages at a time, not one). The contents of those piles are written on my desk dummy. The cards are stacked in page sequence, and I've got a section rough-edited.

There are two main work governors tacked to the wall— a calendar showing days of production and a page-chart. If we have 8 weeks to do 448 pages, then we have to finish a signature of 64 pages every 6 working days, or about 11 pages a day. The signature-finished points are marked on the calendar so I know exactly how far behind we are and when we'll have to start working nights to get copy to the printer on time.

The page chart is big, a couple square inches for each page. On each page I write the basic information for the three layout people. As they finish a pair of pages they mark them off on the chart and look for the next ready pair. From the chart they get the number and name of the pages, the titles of the items (and whether they're new or to be cut out of old flats), plus the appropriate piece of *Divine Right*, and any headings.

In our production the editor, typist, cameraman, and three layout men work together. The editor tries to stay a couple days ahead of layout in fine-editing the pages, and the typist and cameraman a day ahead.

When a layout guy has the copy all gathered he calls me over to see what the space situation is and determine what to leave out and what to retype or reshoot so it will fit. After he's finished I'm called over again for any revisions and to try to catch the mistakes while they're easy to correct. Two other proofreaders also try (while they're indexing) before the page is flatted and sent to the printers.

Just before the signature goes to press I get page-proofs for a last chance at corrections before the karmic soup gels irretrievably.

Some publications make all their editorial decisions by continual discussion and consensus. I admire the ones who can make it work. I've gone the faster and possibly more limited route of strong central direction.

When we have a guest editor, every bit of the authority and most of the responsibility is his. Now that we're quitting, it's all yours.

Layout

We use a tabloid sized page, like the magazines in the Sunday papers. Steve Baer's *Dome Cookbook* was what convinced me it's a good format. You have enough space on each page and spread (facing pair of pages) to lay out a graphic array of information with multiple visual relationships and plenty of freedom for the reader to pick his own path. Also it's an economical size for printing on a web press. The two main disadvantages are that booksellers don't like the display space a tabloid book takes up, and some readers get tired holding the big page up.

(continued)

Take what you can use, and let the rest go by.
Ken Kesey 1969



Composition. IBM Selectric Composer, Evelyn Goslow. Some type fonts are visible at lower left.

IBM Selectric Composer

As far as I'm concerned this is the tool that made our operation possible. Instead of having to send material to a type-setter — a costly, standardized, and full-of-problems procedure — we can sit down with the layout people and editors and fit copy precisely to the page, with all the options of last-minute corrections. IBM offers about 140 different type fonts from 6-point to 12-point in size (you have to buy the fonts, \$36.75 apiece) which permits variety that would cost a fortune at a typesetter. We used 15 fonts for this CATALOG.

The Composer leases for \$150/month, a bargain if you're using it regularly or can rent it to careful people when you aren't. There is some special knowledge without which you will wreck the machine, but IBM can teach it to you in about an hour. The machine can, in two typings, make the right hand side of your copy straight, like in newspapers, but since this saves no space and is no easier to read, I think you're wasting your time to do it.

The Composer is a fine machine, flexible and durable (we dropped ours on the ground and ran wrong voltages through it in the desert; it kept typing). To see one, look up IBM in the yellow pages under Typewriters.

—SB



Larry Whiteside from IBM fixing the composer. Free and fast repair service is part of the lease contract. We needed to call a repairman usually 3-4 times during a production. IBM can furnish service damn near anywhere, which made travelling production a lot easier.



The I Ching: After supper, sitting on the porch in the final hour of light that day, D.R. threw the I Ching. He had always been ceremonious when he cast the Ching; but that evening the sense of ceremony and ritual came more naturally to D.R. than it ever had before. There were no trappings. No candles, or bells or incense, none of that. There was only D.R. on the front porch of the house, sitting on the floor with his feet two steps down, the book beside him on the floor, and the coins lying loosely in his hand. D.R. was sitting quietly, waiting for the spirit to move him, and the spirit was taking its time. It wanted D.R. to really settle now, to fit into his natural place within the flow and motion all around. The day was ending, the night was on its way. The air was fresh and thick with the settling evening dew. Over by the silver-leaf maple tree some lightning bugs were blinking. And above them in the sky the first stars of the evening were popping out. Day and night were trading times and places, easing into one another's spheres around the world.

And D.R. sat very still and allowed a similar change to happen inside him.

(continued)



Layout. Steamboat drawing dragons. George working on pp. 422-423.

Layout (continued)

At first we laid out our pages just the way a newspaper does (the Menlo-Atherton Recorder showed us how). We used flats (blank, line 2-page-sized pieces of paper provided by the printer) on light tables (made out of plywood, fluorescent lights, white plastic, and glass). The flats were placed line-side-down on the light tables, so the lines showed through and you could align items on them but they wouldn't show on the final layout. Also like the newspaper we used beeswax (also provided by the printer) to stick the items down with— it was kept liquid in an old electric frying pan. The advantage of wax is that it's fairly easy to lift an item and restick it. After everything was in place on a page we took a little wooden roller and ran it firmly over all the copy so it would stay attached to the flat.

We made the flats so that they could be used directly by the printer for making the negatives and the plates. Thus in the first CATALOG p. 1 and p. 64 were on the same flat, p. 2 and p. 63, p. 3 and p. 62, and so forth, with the even page always on the left. On this last production we found it more convenient to layout the pages individually in page sequence, and tape together the flats for each signature when we were done (p. 65 and p. 128, p. 66 and p. 127, etc.).

We went along using light tables and wax until Gordon Ashby and Doyle Phillips revolutionized our procedure with the July 70 Supplement. They showed us that working on a portable drafting table, with a T-square and rubber cement for adhesive was really much easier and gave us better layout. We still had lines on the flats but they were on the top surface in light blue (invisible to the camera).

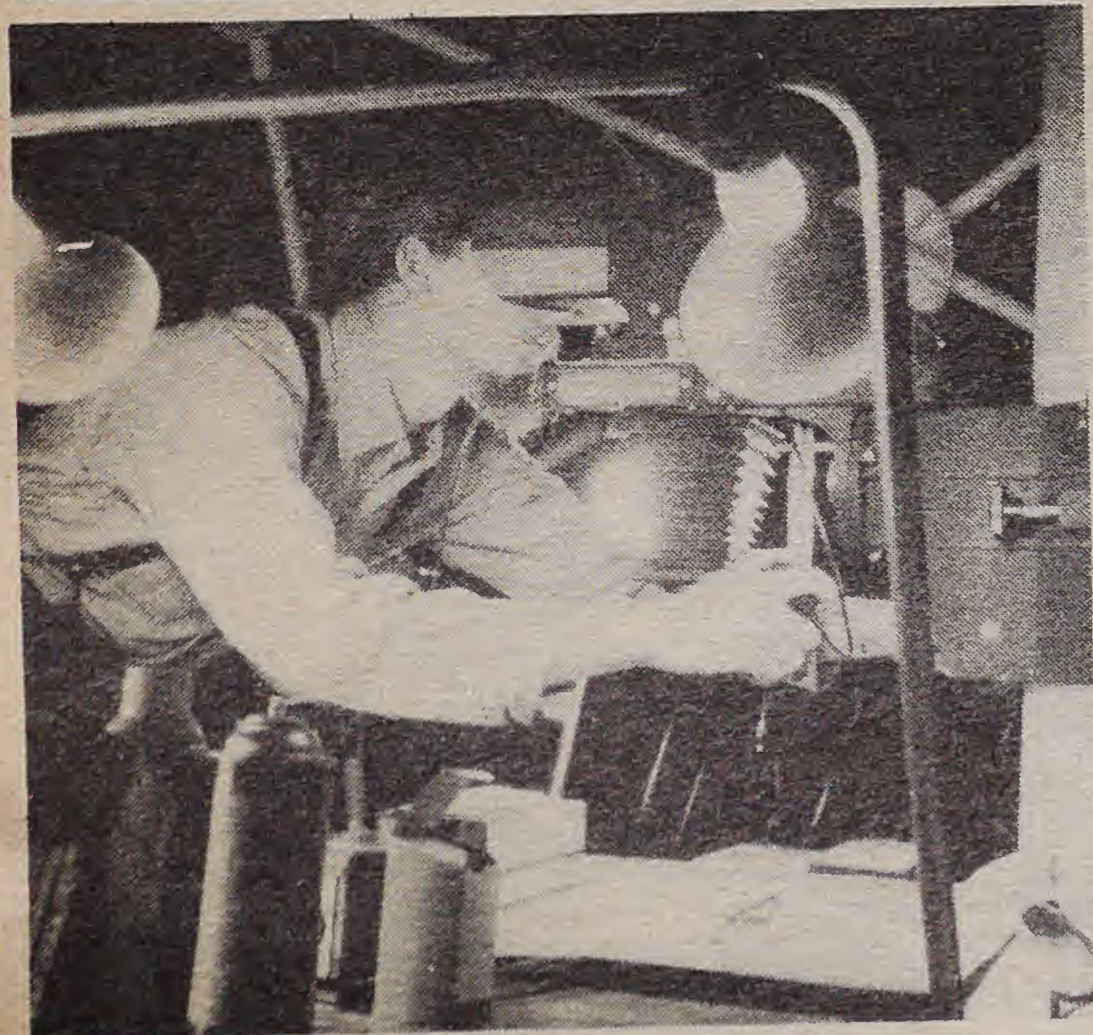
So now our tools are:

- Portable drafting table and engineers lamp
- T-square and triangle (for horizontal and vertical lines and alignment)
- Exacto knives and very good scissors (for cutting copy)
- Rapidograph pens (for clean ink lines)
- Rubber cement and dispenser (jar with brush), and solvent (in a squirt can dispenser, for lifting already glued copy), and warts (sticky squares for cleaning up stray rubber cement on the page).
- Drafting tape (for holding paper in place)
- Thin white tape (for holding down bits of copy where rubber cement won't do it and for covering up mistakes)
- Blue pencil (for marking on the page)
- Template (for ruling curved lines such as around Divine Right)
- Letraset (burnish-down characters for page numbers and headings) and wooden stylus (for burnishing)
- Tuffilm (to spray on finished copy for protection)

We still use the light tables for correcting copy. When the typist makes a mistake she simply types the line again correctly, makes a blue pencil mark, and goes on. Then on the light table it's easy to cut the copy, align the mistaken line under the previous line, stick the pieces together with white tape, and go on to the next mistake.

We used to custom-make each page with various column widths, which only led to extra trouble for us and the reader. Now we type to a basic 20-pica three-column page and everything's much simpler.

—SB



Polaroid MP-3 and Fred Richardson during January production in the desert. In the foreground are cans of Omit, pressurized air for cleaning glass surfaces.

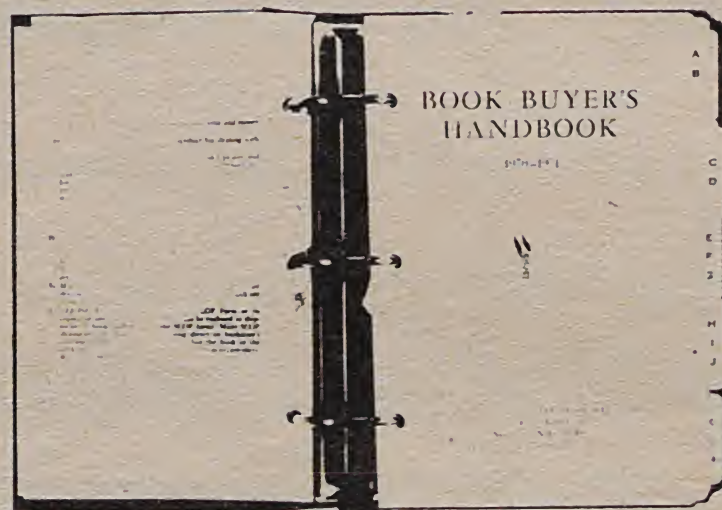
Books

We get letters all the time asking how to start a Truck Store and Diana's quick hard summary tells you the basics. I'll try to tell you how to stock that store with books. There are a few how-to books on the subject of bookstores. The one I read is *How to Run a Paperback Bookstore* (R. R. Bowker 1962, \$5.00). It tells you enough to figure out hardbacks too and if you know nothing about bookstores, get it. Even if you do know something you might enjoy it and it can help answer some questions, like, how come we're not making any money. This book helps to explain the minimum initial investment of \$10,000 though they suggest \$15,000. That sum may sound staggering and I do know people who've done it on \$1,000 but they started 5 years ago and are still in the red. It's really not worth the headaches. Running a store that serves the community and turns people on to new ideas is a far out venture but don't forget that you've got to make a profit ("we're not in business for our health you know...").

Tools of the Trade

Join the American Booksellers Association and with your membership (\$25 the first year) you'll get their Book Buyers Handbook. This gives addresses for all the major publishers and their discount schedules returns policies and other good stuff. It's essential. When you join, tell them you want their MANUAL ON BOOKSELLING and other free stuff (you do have to remind them).

American Booksellers Association
800 Second Avenue
New York, N. Y. 10017



Bowker publishes the other essentials. *Books in Print* (\$25.50 yearly) is two volumes, authors index and titles index of current books in print with price and publisher. Their appendix of publishers' addresses is more complete than the ABA Handbook. *Paperback Books in Print* (\$29.95 yearly) has three cumulative issues in November, March and July which list current paperbacks by subject as well as alphabetically by title and author. There are also monthly editions to fill in between with reviews taken off the book's cover. *Publishers Weekly* is a great magazine and if you don't enjoy it you are probably in the wrong business. A subscription is \$18.50 and aside from giving you general news of the trade, its spring, summer and fall editions are devoted to notices by publishers of the books they plan to release that season. The weekly reviews of forthcoming books are honest and entertaining. The magazine keeps you ahead of your customers. *Forthcoming Books in Print* (\$19.95) supplements *Books in Print* following the same author and title format and is issued 6 times a year. *Subject Guide to Books in Print* (\$23.50 a year) is in two volumes and is an index by subject. For an additional \$8.95 you can get *Subject Guide to Forthcoming Books in Print* which is bi-monthly. *Publishers Trade List Manual* is a 6 volume collection of over 2,000 publishers trade lists which is pretty impressive but its main use is to check discount categories for making single copy orders and if you are not doing much of that or even if you are, you can still get by using some body's last year edition checking price changes in BIP. The cost is \$17.50 a year.

There are many more but these are the ones we have and I've listed them pretty much in the order of frequency of use. When deciding which to get, consider what services you want to provide to your customers.

Polaroid MP-3 Camera

The production photography that I do for W.E.C. includes all halftones up to 3 1/2" x 4 1/2" and line shots up to page size.

Our halftones are done with a screen that has 85 dots to the inch. Really fine printing on slick paper sometimes uses screens with more than 200 dots/inch. Consult with your printer to find out what he can handle with his camera/on what kind of paper/in your production.

We make all our 3 1/2" x 4 1/2" or smaller halftones and let the printer make the bigger ones. We do them as veloxes (positive prints on paper) and paste them down directly on the flats. On large photos that we want especially nice we have the printer do in negative and strip into the negative he does of the flat.

Why not have the printer do all of the halftones? You can. It won't cost anymore. In fact, it may cost less. We like to do our own, though, because it gives us control, reduces the problems of getting all the stuff to the printers in good shape, losing material, and getting the wrong picture in the right spot. We also get to see exactly what the page will look like.

The Polaroid MP-3 with lights, film back, halftone kit, and 5" lens costs about \$800. Film, depending on type, costs \$13.50 to \$15.50 per box of twenty sheets (60¢-75¢ per picture). After working with the MP-3 for 1 1/2 years, I average 2 1/2-3 shots per good halftone, 1 1/2 shots per good line shot. That is working with varied copy. If I have a series of originals to be done to the same size, I can arrange them by contrast and average maybe 1 1/2 shots per good halftone.

That assumes that I have good film. I had no trouble with the Polaroid film the first year I used it, but during the last six months, quality has been extremely variable.

Stat King

We bought a Visual Graphics Stat King camera for doing work up to 11" x 17". It is a fancy photostat machine that will enlarge/reduce 200%-50%. Cost \$4000. It can have prints out and dry in 5 minutes or so. We wanted to do halftones with a contact screen but it didn't work well enough (the camera lacks a vacuum back) so we use it only for line work. Fairly cheap to use, but we don't use it enough to be worth anywhere near \$4000.

—Fred Richardson

R. R. Bowker
1180 Avenue of the Americas
New York, N. Y. 10036



Kinds of Books

Books are not just books. There are obviously hardback (cloth) and paperbacks. There are also text, trade, and mass editions.

Text editions are not simply the books you read in school but rather are designated by publishers as texts and sold to bookstores on a very short discount, generally 20%. This small discount is the reason most stores don't carry text books. The Truck Store is an exception. Trade books are the largest category of books and they, like texts can be either hardbound or paper. Book stores get the most generous discount on these, generally 40% or better. Trade paperbacks are termed quality paperbacks. Mass books are weird and if you buy them from a distributor, which you are almost forced to do, you get only 30% discount. If you can buy direct from the publisher you get 40%, but more about this confusion later.

Where do Books Come From

You buy both direct from the publisher and from wholesalers (known also as jobbers or distributors). The best way to find out about wholesalers in your area is to ask around at friendly stores. You will find that most wholesalers deal mainly one kind of book, that is, trade hardbacks, trade paperbacks (call these guys quality jobbers) or mass paperbacks (the last are a special case and will be dealt with in their own section). You'll need accounts with all 3 kinds. At the Truck Store we do most of our business with publishers and use wholesalers only to fill in. There are advantages and disadvantages to this.

Wholesaler advantages: They are regional and thus can give faster service and shorter distance makes for less postage and freight costs. Since they are smaller operations they are easier to deal with and adjustments in billing or invoice errors are handled more quickly and returns are made with no hassle. Also there is less paper work as you are dealing with one firm rather than 20, so there's just one invoice and one bill. This saves an incredible amount of time.

Disadvantages: They either don't stock what you want or are out of it and won't back order (that is, record your order and send it when the books come in). Their maximum discount is anywhere from 36-40%. You must pay 30 days from date of invoice.

Publishers advantages: They do have the books you want and they will back order. They may say you must pay in 30 days but allow 60 to 90 without bitching. They will send you current price lists, order forms, catalogs, advance notices of new books, and a salesman once in a while. Salesmen lay raps on you about why you should buy 25 copies of everything in their line but also they help you stay on top of it, assist in getting returns permissions, and some times they'll give you free books or take you out to lunch. Publisher's most important advantage is their better discounts. They generally have a minimum order of 5 books to get a 40% discount but from there discounts go up. This schedule varies with every publisher and is fully detailed in the ABA handbook. WORKING WITH THESE DISCOUNTS IS WHERE YOU MAKE YOUR MONEY!!!

Publishers disadvantages: Unless you live in the East you have to wait at least 3 weeks for delivery and pay that long distance postage or freight, though a few publishers have regional centers. (If you are in a rush say so in red letters and ask for "special handling" book rate which is not too much more expensive and can speed delivery by as much as 10 days.) Their bills are often computerized and each account means more invoices and more bills to pay and it is a lot of paperwork. Getting returns permissions is a drag and the delay for credit on returns is slow but we feel that the better discounts we get from publishers offsets these. One other disadvantage is that there is the minimum order to earn their discount but a way to get around it is the single copy order plan (SCOP). Essentially you send in a check with your order on a special order form and the publisher gives you a better discount than he would otherwise (see the ABA Handbook for details.) We use this for the few super expensive books we stock rather than invest money in keeping them around the store collecting dust.

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PACKAGING SIMPLICITY JIFFY PADDED BOOK BAGS



Available to you from
200 distributors from
Coast to Coast
WRITE FOR FREE SAMPLES

JIFFY MFG. CO.
HILLSIDE, N. J. 07205

The Mass Book Racket

We have found that once you deal with a distributor of mass books the mass publishers are reluctant to sell to you. (I think it's some sort of conspiracy.) Mass distributors have some advantages in that they are everywhere there are magazines (that's the other side of their business) so there is probably one near you. This means that you can call in an order one day and can get it two days later. Delivery is cheap if not free and you can even go pick up the books yourself. Ask and maybe they will let you take a shopping cart around and pick the books off the shelves yourself (check out their nudie magazines while you're there.) Returns are also done with no hassle. None of these things do the Truck Store much good as we carry very few mass books but if you are doing a more general store you will find these things helpful. However they quite often don't stock the books you want as the bulk of their trade is traditionally with drug stores and magazine stands and they are not easily persuaded; if it doesn't sell at the corner grocery they won't stock it. **THEY ONLY ALLOW 30% DISCOUNT** and sometimes less which is hardly enough to get by on. If you do mail order you can lose money.

How To Get Around This (Maybe)

If you are just starting I suggest that you set up accounts with mass publishers from the beginning telling them you are a new store. If they try to direct you toward a local distributor tell them you're not interested (ours makes deliveries before we open and many boxes of books have been rained on). Then, when you are established, see what kind of service the local guy can give you. This way at least you have an option. If you've already been buying from the distributor and want to order direct, send in an order to the publisher. The minor mass houses will be more likely to ship direct because their local distribution isn't very good but with the major publishers this probably won't work. Another tactic would be to use the order form the publishers send out with promo material (tho you might have to write first telling them to put you on their mailing list. Getting yourself listed in Publishers' Weekly as a new store accomplishes this, not a bad thing to do.) They might just fill your order automatically or they might send it back to your local distributor to fill. But if they do fill it they cannot legally refuse to ship future orders direct, though they might.

Another tactic is to get in touch with their salesman (though being regional he may be far away) and get him to send in your order or a letter okaying your order. He'll be somewhat sympathetic as more orders mean more money for him and it will look like he's really doing his job. The problem here is that he probably isn't, and you may have some trouble finding him. The main office may tell you who he is or send him your way or you could ask other salesmen, bookstores, or maybe quality distributors. I wouldn't ask the mass distributor as he may catch on that you want to take your business elsewhere.

Some distributors:

Ray Surguine (3640 Walnut, Boulder, Colorado 80302) is a western wholesaler that carries both quality and mass paperbacks. Their discounts are straight 30% on mass and 40% on quality with a minimum order of 25 books on each. They are a good firm to do business with when your local guy doesn't have what you want and you are doing battle with the mass publisher.

Book People (2940 7th St., Berkeley, Ca. 94710) is a quality paperback wholesaler. They are unique in that they carry a lot of small presses. They have a free catalog.

L & S Distributors (1161 Post St., S. F., Ca. 94109) carry a lot of the same publishers as Book People but fill orders faster and seem to have books in stock more regularly. They give good service and use them alot.

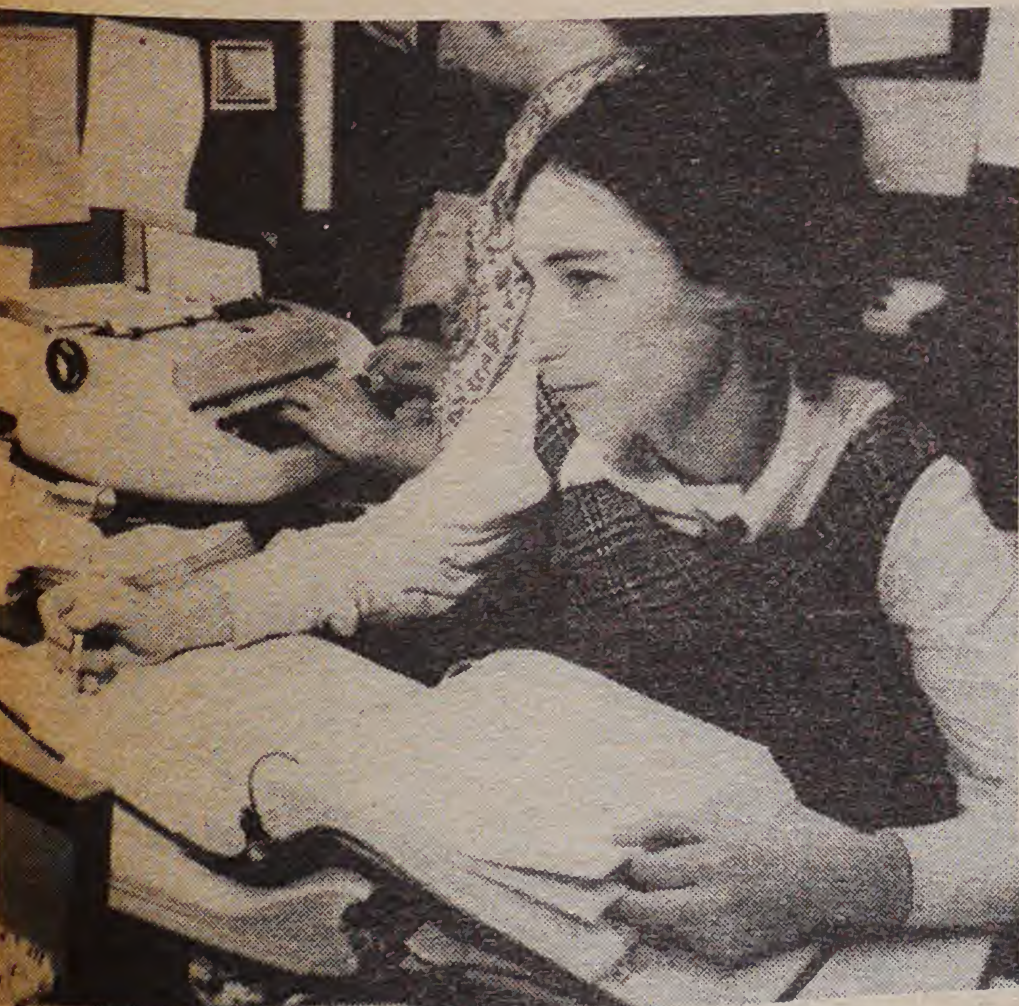
Baker & Taylor Company has regional offices (Somerville, N.Y. 08876; Momence, Ill. 60954; and Reno, Nevada 89502). They carry a very complete line of hardbacks, including text editions, and a limited selection of trade paperbacks.

The East Coast is full of wholesalers of all kinds of books. Check the telephone books for games of mass distributors, either under Books or under Magazines.

There are lots of things I didn't talk about, most of which are contained in HOW TO RUN A PAPERBACK BOOKSTORE. Things like stock control, checking invoices and paying bills, making returns, setting up credit and budgeting have to be learned and systemized as you go along, everyone has their own way of doing it.

One prime piece of advice to those of you who've never run a bookstore before would be to get yourself a job for a while to apprentice or if you can't do this try and hire someone who knows something about the business. If you have any specific questions you can write to us and we will try and answer them. Please don't send orders to us and expect us to fill them at a discount as we are a retailer just like you. Good luck.

—Laura Besserman



Sam Falk

The Quick Hard Summary.

In the September 69 Supplement, Stewart boldly invited anyone who was thinking of opening a Whole Earth Store to write to Hal for a quick hard summary. We've since had many inquiries & various of our staff have written numerous more or less quick & more or less hard summaries. Here's a sort of composite of all that information. We've also told folks to write to the two going stores we now know of, & they've been very helpful:

Whole Earth Access Co.
2466 Shattuck
Berkeley, CA 94704
(415) 848-0510

Whole Earth Learning Community
817 East Johnson
Madison, Wisconsin 53703
(608) 256-8828

The Quick Hard Summary

First, get lots of money to start with. Ideally, enough to run on for at least six months, preferably longer, & assuming whatever you make during the first raunchy months will go for unforeseen expenses, which there always are. A very rough minimum estimate is \$10,000; it depends a lot on how much space you want to occupy & what you plan to do with it. Basic necessary expenses are: rent—often first & last months', plus cleaning deposit maybe—utilities—gas, electric, phone, water, garbage, some deposits required; insurance; equipment & supplies (possibly cash register, adding machine, typewriters), forms, paper, notebooks, files; use permit from your city—not much (\$10–\$50); furniture & redecorating: desks, tables, chairs, shelving, display areas, signs, etc. (A lot can be done with used stuff). If you don't have them you'll need tools—hammers, saws, etc. And paint. Salaries—possibly the largest single item, unless people work for free, which tends to breed poverty & discontent.

Now—assuming you have some bread, or think you can get some—find a place. Not too high-rent, but hopefully somewhere where people walk by a lot. Don't sign a lease until you have a friendly lawyer check it—most agencies use standard forms that are designed to screw the tenant, but you can change clauses you don't like if they want to rent the building. Next: apply to your town or city for a use permit, which often takes a while to get. Without one you can be shut down forthwith. Apply to your state for a resale permit, same reason. Invite your local building inspector & fire inspector to come inspect—before signing a lease, if possible. Because—if you're in an old building, you may be required by law to make changes in wiring, plumbing, fix leaks, etc. at your own expense. Again this is preventative—later harassment can come from these areas, & you have no recourse. Again, a good friendly lawyer can be a lot of help in knowing local ordinances, etc. Also, lots of towns are zoned so that you can only do business in certain areas. Find out about zoning before renting.

Hopefully when you start getting your building into shape & see how much space you have, you can start ordering stock. A good idea is to figure out how much it's going to cost you to keep the physical place & the people going for six months. Then see how much money you have left & order your stock accordingly. You'll probably have already opened a checking account. If you're going to stock books, join the American Booksellers Association—\$25 gets you a manual of publishers with info on almost all publishers—their discounts, access info, credit terms, policies, etc., free advice; & so forth. You can also file a statement of your credit with their affiliated group—the American Book Publishers Council; whenever you open a new account with a publisher you

just tell him your credit was established there, he looks you up, & things are speeded up considerably. Usually publishers & suppliers require payment in advance on your first, or first several orders—after a while you can order, be sent an invoice, & have 30 days to pay. The more you order at once, the better discount you get—it's a question of working up to where you're selling enough that you can afford to order in larger quantities. It takes an average of a month for orders to arrive. By the way, when opening accounts, please make it clear that you're not connected with us—we've had trouble already with publishers putting other people's accounts on our statements, because of similarity of names.

What to sell? Depends a lot on you. We do mostly books & that's what we know most about—also some merchandise (Ashley Stoves, Corona corn mill, Aladdin lamps, Snuggly baby carriers, etc.) & a few magazines. A lot of the people who've written to us are interested in health food; arts & crafts, & other trips. Selling food requires special permits; that's about all we know. You can often get local arts & crafts on consignment (you pay the artist when the item is sold), which can save you some basic stock expense. A rule of thumb in ordering books is that cheap paperbacks sell the most—you can be surer of selling more of them than of the more expensive hardbacks. The Catalog itself is our bestseller, could probably be yours too.

OK. If you get this far—plan a gala opening for publicity—invite Everyone & serve cheap (homemade!) goodies. Word of mouth is best advertising we've found. But you can put up posters, flyers, whatever. Try to get your local newspaper to do a feature on you. Smile a lot.

We'd like to see a Whole Earth Store in every town. Yeal! But before you start, be sure you're ready to do business—you will have to hassle with publishers & suppliers, keep records, mess with forms, numbers, paperwork. You will need a lot of human energy—someone has to do: ordering stuff, keeping track of what comes in, selling stuff, bookkeeping, cleaning up around the joint, correspondence, typing, filing, building or buying equipment, furniture, painting, keeping track of what you have & what you need (inventory), business with landlord & miscellaneous officials, decision-making, paying bills & payroll, etc., etc. Our aim here is not to discourage anyone, but to encourage open-eyedness about the prospects.

—Diana Shugart



Sam Falk

AAA Adding Machine Company

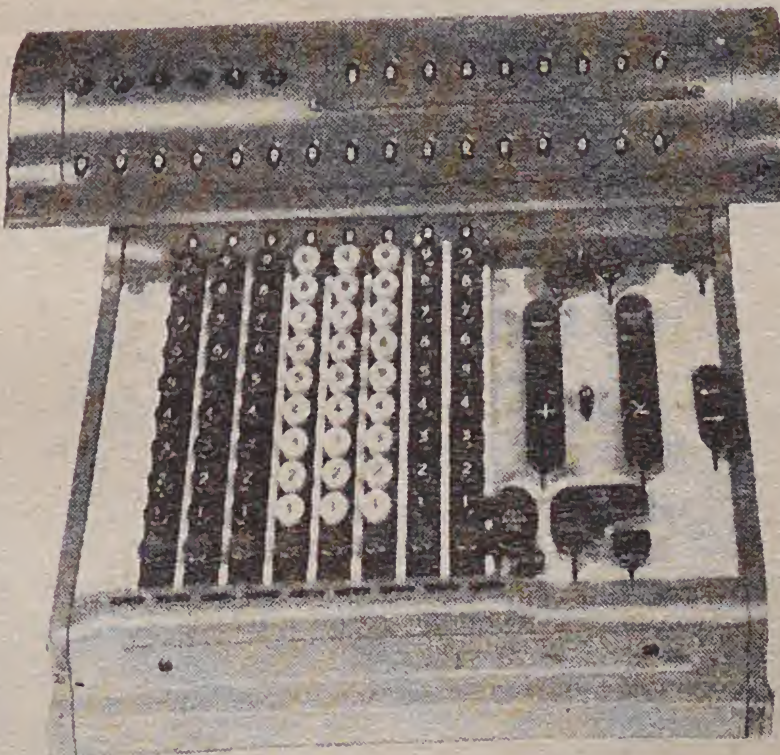
I wish we'd known about this outfit when we started business. They carry used and reconditioned calculators, adding machines and cash registers at good prices.

—SB

Catalog

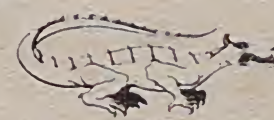
FREE

from:
AAA Adding Machine Company
26-09 Jackson Avenue
Long Island City, New York 11101

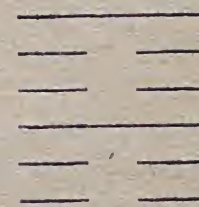


MARCHANT \$99.00

Automatic carriage return • Carriage tabulation; preset decimal as well as multiplication • No repeat or non-repeat keys • Automatic elimination of 1 in division • Complete carriage carry over • Exclusive keyboard check dial • Complete in line 3 figure proof.



Beginning in his mind, then flowing down along his spine and outward through his body, the change came slowly over him. D.R.'s hands waited for it to be complete. Then, on their own, unhurried, they began to toss the coins. Six times they shook and dropped the coins, and the reading materialized:



Ken/Keeping Still, Mountain

"The image of this hexagram is the mountain, the youngest of heaven and earth. The male principle is at the top, because it strives upward by nature; the female principle is below, since the direction of its movement is downward. Thus there is rest because the movement has come to its normal end.

"The hexagram signifies the end and the beginning of all movement. The back is named because in the back are located all the nerve fibers that mediate movement. If the movement of these spinal nerves is brought to a standstill, the ego, with its restlessness, disappears as it were. When a man has thus become calm, he may turn to the outside world. He no longer sees in it the struggle and tumult of individual beings, and therefore he has that true peace of mind which is needed for understanding the great laws of the universe and for acting in harmony with them. Whoever acts from these deep levels makes no mistakes."

Stranger In A Strange Land: D.R. tried to read that novel by lamplight after he went to bed, but he was too sleepy to pay attention.

Some other time, he said to himself.

And he blew the lamp out and went to sleep.

One of the main things that drove me into business was ignorance. A liberally educated young man, I hadn't the faintest idea how the world worked. Bargaining, distribution, mark-up, profit, bankruptcy, lease, invoice, fiscal year, inventory— it was all mystery to me, and usually depicted as sordid.

I noticed that great lengths were gone to in order to prevent "consumers" from knowing that part of purchase price went to the retailer. It seemed exquisitely insane to me. You sell deception and buy mistrust, to no advantage. The retailer in fact earns his 25-40% by tiresome work, but the prevailing attitude makes him out a clever crook. Ignorance institutionalized. Would you mind leaving the room, we're talking about money.

So along with shit, fuck, cunt, and the rest, I wanted to say among my friends, money, not to swear but to honor function.

You may or may not think capitalism is nice, and I don't know if it's nice. But we should both know that the **WHOLE EARTH CATALOG** is made of it. Capital was invested by my parents and parents'-parents'-parents in such activities as iron-mining in Minnesota and Eastman Kodak. They paid nicely enough, and by family attentiveness-to-business and flat-out parental generosity, I wound up with a bundle of money without having done a lick of work for it. Stock had been bought in my name; my parents handled it but it was mine to work with; it's a good system, like giving your kid a tough horse to ride when he's young.

By the time I was 29 the stock came to over \$100,000. I had ignored it all through my twenties, living in \$20 apartments and not travelling much, occasionally wage-earning in photography, design, Army. I suspect I felt guilty about the money. I know I felt stupid about it. So it sat, and I sat, and alienation was a cozy room. Garrett Hardin has written that alienation and irresponsibility are parents of invention. James Watson says that boredom is a prime incentive to creativity. They're right.

The idea for the CATALOG hit me plenty hard, but I think I could never have raised the money for it. Certainly not by grant— I did know about foundations by then. I doubt if I had the brass to steal the money, or deal dope for it. Honest labor would have taken too long for my short attention span.

So I invested, comrade. I took the profits from old investments and put em into a new one, a brand new naive hopeful unlikely business with ditto in charge. Investing in yourself has hard truthful edges; I hope you get a crack at it, and can stay as sweet as you were as a dependent.

Why am I saying all this? Because many who applaud the CATALOG and wholeheartedly use it, have no applause for the uses of money, of ego, of structure (read uptightness), of competition, of business as usual. All the things, plus others, which make the CATALOG, and make the selective applauders into partial liars, and me one too if I aid the lie.

The CATALOG is advantage-seeking, all right. It gains advantage half as far as it gives it. 50% efficiency is about the best nature can do, says Odum (p. 8).

I am also saying all this by way of thanks to my parents. It's as Dick Alpert used to say: It's love money that underwrites this sort of venture every time. Which suggests that if foundations and governments want to do the job they say they do, they should retain the services of better lovers.

The figures. I thought it would cost \$10,000 for April-December of the first year, (I didn't even think about it until Dick Raymond mildly asked me). I would loan money to the CATALOG at 8% interest, to be paid back when and if we were money ahead. (This "self-dealing" is now illegal, reasonably. Assholes with tax-evasive non-profit corporations pour money back and forth within the corporation and collect personal tax-free interest. Borrowing now, I'd have to use a bank, and they'd get the interest.)

Well, that first nine months cost \$12,780, with no noticeable income. On that hopeful note we started the store (\$450/month rent) and started buying stock, too late for the Christmas rush—most book stores do 1/3 of their year's business in November-December. By February 1969 the CATALOG and Truck Store had gone through \$28,260, of which \$21,425 was loaned by me and Lois. We had 340 subscribers, had sold 800 copies of the Fall 68 CATALOG and were printing a second thousand of them. By May '69 we'd spent \$42,550, of which \$27,425 was loaned. We stopped loaning. Income kept growing, and by early Fall 1969 we went from red to black. We'd paid for the past.

At the time, in fact, finances were not particularly on my mind. How To Make Money was not the design problem. (I'd heard and bought Ken Kesey's advice that you don't make money by making money: you have that in mind early on, but then you forget it and concentrate entirely on good product; the money comes to pass.) The problem was How to Generate a Low-Maintenance High-Yield Self-Sustaining Critical Information Service.

Easy. You name what you know is good stuff and indicate exactly where to get it. You do this on newsprint, which costs 1/2 of the next higher page stock. Low overhead every step. Employ stone amateurs with energy and enthusiasm. Build furniture out of scrap doors, light tables out of scrap plywood, work in whatever space you have. Pay your pros \$5/hr (no raises) and the beginners \$2/hr with 25¢/hr raises every couple months. Employees fill out their own time sheets. If they get dishonest about that— or anything that hurts service, fire them. Spread responsibility as far as it will go, credit too.

If you're doing a clear public service you may get non-profit tax-exempt status. (We pay State taxes on store property, and State and Federal taxes on the store and mail order operation. The CATALOG is non-profit— this was helped by our lowering the price of the CATALOG twice, and by our plan to stop, which indicated we weren't kidding about being primarily an educational prototype. Even so the IRS is grumbling and may change our classification, which could endanger Portola Institute.)

To ensure in-house quality control, acquire low-cost maximum-flexibility tools. For us that was the IBM Selectric Composer for type-setting, the Polaroid MP-3 camera for line and half-tone graphics, and Pitney-Bowes mailing machine and scale for the mail order operation. Lease where you can. What must be bought can be owned by individuals who get depreciation tax advantage that the non-profit corporation can't get.

As Fuller advises: Always promise less than you deliver, and let customers, business associates, staff come to their own conclusions about you. Small business is based on earned trust. Send cash-with-order in your first dealings with another firm. Pay bills scrupulously on time. Keep exact, open books on all your accounting. Small businessmen respond faster to honesty than any other kind of person: most of them couldn't care less what you wear, smoke, or think if you're straight with them and don't care what they wear, smoke, or think.

What you're trying to do is nourish and design an organism which can learn and stay alive while it's learning. Once that process has its stride, don't tinker with it; work for it, let it work for you. Make interesting demands on each other.

Our stopping is primarily an economic experiment. Rather than do the usual succession things we prefer to just cease supply, let demand create its own new sources. Our hope is that those sources will be more diverse and better than we have been or could have been if we continued.

There's money in this business. We made some in spite of ourselves. To really clean up we could have:

Had a private sale of stock at the beginning like Rolling Stone and Zomeworks.

Sold expensive advertising space in the CATALOG.

Kept the cover price at \$4.

Gone for mass distribution.

Franchised Whole Earth Truck Stores around the world.

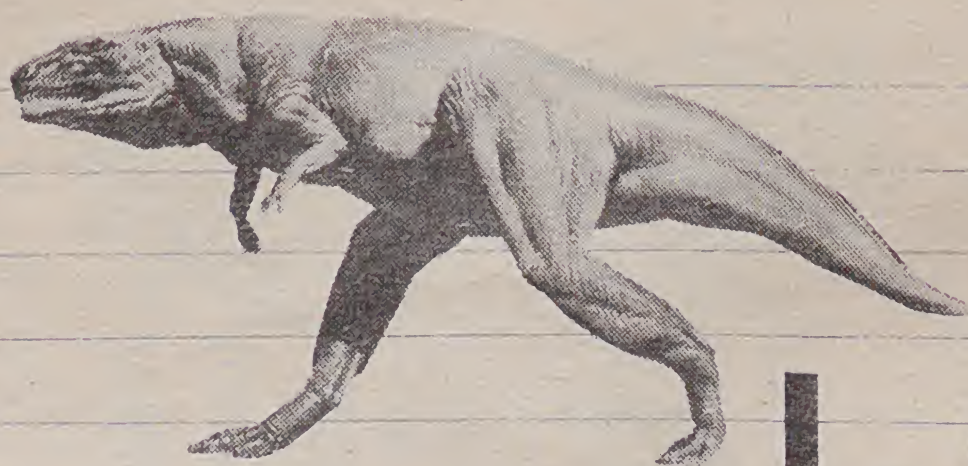
Developed a line of Whole Earth tools.

Sold the name and momentum of the CATALOG for a princely sum.

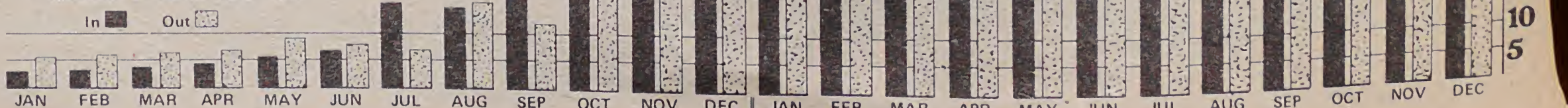
The expenses on this LAST CATALOG will take us back down to zero and probably past it. We're footing most of the \$200,000 printing bills and we won't get any income from Random House until November. It looks like we'll have to go into a second printing before then. Eventually we'll be money ahead again, and I'll be responsible for doing something interesting with it.

Here's a rough estimate of what happens to the \$5 you paid for this CATALOG. (It's true only at the instant that all 200,000 copies of the first printing have been sold and no further have been paid for.)

\$5	bookseller
\$2.00	bookseller
.50	jobber
.45	Random House
1.00	printing and binding
.15	production salaries, supplies, research
.10	shipping and miscellaneous
.064	Gurney Norman (8% of net)
.0736	Don Gerrard (10% of what's left)
.0662	Portola Institute (tithe) (10% of what's left)
.5962	The Future (all slacks and surpluses taken up here)



Whole Earth Catalog Cash Flow 69-70



Here's the current state of our books:

Exhibit 1

Whole Earth Division of
Portola Institute
Balance Sheet
April 30, 1971
(Unaudited)

Assets	
Current assets:	
Cash - Bank of California, commercial account	\$ 24,714.40
- Bank of California, restricted account	35,052.30
- Wells Fargo Bank, savings accounts	1.00
- Bay View Federal Savings & Loan	120,624.85
	180,392.55
Accounts receivable, catalogue & mail order	\$ 158,407.18
Accounts receivable, other	10,484.68
Advances, Whole Earth, Inc.	5,000.00
Inventories	39,827.16
Prepaid expenses	1,078.94
Deposit on catalogue printing	40,000.00
Total current assets	435,190.51
Property and equipment:	
Furniture and equipment	8,932.39
Less: Accumulated depreciation	734.50
	8,197.89
Total Assets	\$ 443,388.40

Liabilities and Capital	
Current liabilities:	
Accounts payable, trade	\$ 30,215.63
Payroll and sales taxes payable	2,897.70
Total liabilities	33,113.33
Capital:	
Surplus, June 1, 1970	\$ 187,571.47
Net income and surplus, Exhibit 2	222,703.60
	410,275.07
Total Liabilities and Capital	\$ 443,388.40

This Balance Sheet as at April 30, 1971 and the accompanying Statement of Income were not audited by me and, accordingly, I cannot express an opinion of them.

Vernon M. John

Exhibit 3

Whole Earth Division of
Portola Institute
Departmental Statement of Operating Income or Surplus
June 1, 1970 to April 30, 1971

	Mail Order / Store		Catalogues	
	April, 1971	Year To Date	April, 1971	Year To Date
Income:				
Sales	\$ 20,985.08	\$ 263,881.35	\$ 27,719.95	\$ 498,052.43
Cost of sales:				
Salaries	4,155.12	33,872.54	5,554.83	38,352.23
Merchandise	14,269.80	179,929.65	14,905.85	132,098.75
Printing			1,848.39	29,052.78
Distribution	1,000.00	2,324.07	650.00	11,195.87
Outside services		529.87	450.47	7,818.73
Supplies and Miscellaneous	257.51	1,272.93	16.50	33.00
Depreciation	49.50	393.50		1,224.39
Travel and auto. expenses	15.68	15.68	62.76	167.77
Utilities	62.76	110.68	275.00	1,643.66
Rent	225.00	450.00		
	20,035.37	218,898.92	23,763.80	221,587.18
Gross profit	949.71	44,982.43	3,956.15	276,465.25
General and administrative expenses:				
Telephone	101.43	121.34	195.56	236.67
Office supplies and misc.	367.41	315.11	859.59	865.19
Insurance		559.50		186.50
Legal and accounting		70.00	190.00	343.75
Donations				200.00
Division charges	2,000.00	2,000.00		3,000.00
In-house projects costs			495.00	527.03
Receipts (over) and under	238.58	723.55	(189.90)	192.90
Adminis. expenses previously applied		33,510.90		66,602.13
	2,707.42	37,300.40	1,551.14	72,154.17
Net operating income or surplus	\$ (1,757.71)	\$ 7,682.03	2,405.01	\$ 204,311.08

This Statement has not been audited by me and, accordingly, I cannot express an opinion of it.

Vernon M. John Certified Public Accountant

And here's to you, customers, contributors, colleagues, successors. Don't take any wooden nickels.

—SB

Assets	
California, commercial account	\$ 24,714.40
Bank, restricted account	35,062.30
Bank, savings accounts	1.00
Federal Savings & Loan	120,824.65
	180,382.55

\$ 158,407.18	173,891.86
10,484.68	39,827.16
5,000.00	1,078.94
	40,000.00
	435,190.51

8,932.39	8,197.89
734.50	
	\$ 443,388.40

	\$ 30,215.63
	2,897.70
	33,113.33

\$ 187,571.47	410,275.97
2,222,703.60	
	\$ 443,388.40

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History

Some of what happened around here for the last three years.

The WHOLE EARTH CATALOG got started in a plane over Nebraska in March 1968. I was returning to California from my father's long dying and funeral that morning in Illinois. The sun had set ahead of the plane while I was reading Spaceship Earth by Barbara Ward. Between chapters I gazed out the window into dark nothing and slid into a reverie about my friends who were starting their own civilization hither and yon in the sticks and how could I help. The L. L. Bean Catalog of outdoor stuff came to mind and I pondered upon Mr. Bean's service to humanity over the years. So many of the problems I could identify came down to a matter of access. Where to buy a windmill. Where to get good information on bee-keeping. Where to lay hands on a computer without forfeiting freedom...

Shortly I was fantasizing access service. A Truck Store, maybe, traveling around with information and samples of what was worth getting and information where to get it. A Catalog too, continuously updated, in part by the users. A Catalog of goods that owed nothing to the suppliers and everything to the users. It would be something I could put some years into.

Amid the fever I was in by this time, I remembered Fuller's admonition that you have about 10 minutes to act on an idea before it recedes back into dreamland. I started writing on the end papers of Barbara Ward's book (never did finish reading it).

The next morning I approached Dick Raymond at Portola Institute with the idea. I'd been desultorily working for him for about a half year, had helped instigate one costly failure (an 'Education Fair' which aborted), and was partly into another doomed project I called E-I-E-I-O (Electronic Interconnect Educated Intellect Operation).

I told him this Access Catalog was what I wanted to do now. Dick listened gravely and asked a few questions I had no answers for (Who do you consider as the audience for this 'catalog'? What kind of expenses do you think you'll have in the first year? What will be in the catalog? How often would you publish it? How many copies?). All I could tell him was that I felt serious enough about the project to put my own money into it, but not for a while yet. I wanted to move into the scheme gradually, using Portola's office, phone, stationery, and finances (which were Dick's personal savings, dwindling fast). He said okay.

For over a year Portola Institute had been nothing but Dick, a secretary he shared, his office, and a few expensive projects with big ideas and little to show. So he rented a nearby set of cubicles that some architects were moving out of, to give us more room to make mistakes in. I was working in my cubicle several weeks later when Dick leaned in the door and asked, "By the way, what do you think you'll call it?" My head filled with the last success I'd had, a 1966 photograph-of-the-whole-Earth campaign, which I felt was still incomplete. I told him, "I dunno, Whole Earth Catalog, or something."

My activities at this time were mostly visiting book stores and looking at books. One of Dick's friends at the Checkered Frog bookstore in Pacifica told me I could get single copies of books from publishers if I joined the American Booksellers Association, a commitment of \$25. Shortly after that I made the big step and (holding my breath) spent \$60 on note-o-gram stationery from Modern Business Forms. Dick helped me open a commercial account at a bank.

I was operating without pay but keeping track of my time, to pay myself back-wages of \$5/hr if we ever started to make money. In July 68 I printed up a mimeographed 6-page "partial preliminary booklist" of what I'd gathered so far (Tantra Art, Cybernetics, The Indian Tipi, Recreational Equipment, about 120 items). With samples of each in the back of our truck Lois and I set out to visit the market - familiar communes in New Mexico and Colorado. In about a month the Whole Earth Truck Store did a stunning \$200 of business. No profit, but it didn't cost too much and was good education.

On return in August I hired an employee, Sandra Tcherepnin, who came around part-time to type and buoy my conviction that something was going on. In September Lois and I moved into Ortega Park (formerly Rancho Diablo), 70 acres and house newly leased by Portola Institute as a teachers' laboratory. She was housekeeper and I was caretaker in an empty mansion. It was a plush time.

Dick Raymond had introduced me to Joe Bonner, a talented teenage artist looking for work. He preferred to do layout than janitor for Portola so I took him to Gordon Ashby's design studio in San Francisco for a 10-minute course in layout. In October 68 we started production on the first WHOLE EARTH CATALOG in the garage at Ortega. Sandy fell in love with the IBM composer while Joe nailed together light tables out of scrap plywood. We got some electric heaters and started work. Joe did layout, Sandy typed, and I researched, reviewed, edited, and photographed. Whenever the typewriter, heaters, camera lights, and fry-pan of wax were on simultaneously the electricity went out. We'd spend an hour on projects like making an exotic border with the composer. A leisurely production. A month or so for 64 white-spaced pages.

We had the contents printed at Nowels Publications, a newspaper press just down the street from Portola Institute, and the cover printed at East Wind in San Francisco (using the picture from a Whole Earth poster we'd already had them print), and the binding done at another place, with us doing the transporting between. It was a terrible arrangement. The 1000 copies we printed were a huge chore to cart around.

Our real luck was in finding Nowels Publications and Bob Parks. I've never met a man I'd rather do business with, and to find a printer who is fast, thorough, cooperative, creative, honest, and inexpensive is just unheard of. We had one CATALOG printed elsewhere and regretted it.

I only dimly recall what we did with that first CATALOG. We sent them to the 50 or so subscribers we'd got with mailers and personal contact. We carted some around to stores, who didn't want them, not even on consignment ("Too big. Too expensive. What is it?") We traded some with other publications like This Magazine is About Schools, Explorers Trademart Log, and Green Revolution.

Meanwhile we were starting a store. Dick Raymond had had his eye on the building at 558 Santa Cruz, just across the alley from the cubicles he'd rented. Formerly a USO, then a Salvation Army store, then a printer's, the place had apartments upstairs and 4000 sq. ft. of big rooms downstairs and a nice store front. The printer had failed and the building was going to be sold. Dick got with the likeliest buyer and worked out a 5-year lease for the downstairs part at \$450/month. We felt like we were really into the soup now. Five years! That's 1973.

At Thanksgiving we'd met a girl from New York named Annie Helmut who had some familiarity with the publishing world, mostly on the publicity end. She was hired to take on publicity and help with research and typing since Sandy had left for woollier pastures. We soon found out that handling our own distribution was going to be impossible (bookstores wouldn't pay what they owed and hassled us with endless bizarre problems). Annie started looking around for other alternatives.



Arthur and Julia Brand

What I'm visualizing is an Access Table (accessory?) with the ~~whole~~ all manner of access materials & advice for sale cheap. Including performance on stuff, books, dandy survival and campy equipment, catalogs, design plans, professional subtypes, etc. equipment (I'd like others, equipment - some element of basket here). Prime item of course would be the catalog. Prime item, the road show. Educational materials, up self-education Books on amateur education. Everything for small scale access. Be of course a large service to the product.

research. I would prefer to offer at most 2 of any item. 1) The best. 2) The best/cheapest.

Techniques and tools of access acceleration for the self-motivated.

On items carried in the catalog, have a first recommendation by credit. Encouraging others to follow.

Would there be any economy in selling reading material direct to suppliers, so I don't get to goods, but directly to subscribers?

Suppose the traveling store was a covered area charged admission?

The Whole Earth appendix to Spaceship Earth

In December 68 we moved into 558 Santa Cruz. There wasn't much to move - a chair and some books. Joe set to work with free scrap wood making the store a funky pleasant wooden place. We sublet an office in the front to Dave Shapira and a space in the back to lawyer Jim Wolpman. That cut our rent to \$250/month. Joe made desks and tables out of doors and 2 x 4's. We never got around to changing the walls from institutional green.

From the beginning the pretty little Indian girl Lois, who still has to show her ID to bartenders, was the hard core of the business. She applied her math background to our bookkeeping, and her sharp tongue to our laziness and forgotten promises. She had the administrative qualities you look for in a good First Sergeant. In my experience every working organization has one overworked

underpaid woman in the middle of things carrying most of the load. None of the rest of us ever cleaned the bathrooms. Lois cleaned the bathrooms.

Annie was at the City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco one day talking to Shig the manager about where to look for a distributor. Shig suggested a new long-haired outfit in Berkeley called Book People. Annie went to them and was immediately taken with Don Gerrard and Don Burns. Pretty soon Book People was our distributor, and that was a big relief. We made no contracts or vows, but the CATALOG stayed with Book People as sole distributor until the March 71 Supplement (when the Realist took half the distribution).

In January we had a grand opening party at the store, though we'd been open for a couple weeks ("There's a customer in the store!" we'd whisper in the back room.) Annie and I invited all the newspapers and were surprised and hurt when none of them showed up. It was a nice party anyway. The readership was a small sort of cult then, most of whom seemed to know each other, or wanted to.

Also in January we produced our first "Difficult But Possible Supplement to the Whole Earth Catalog". It was a 32-page newsprint collection of friends' letters, old pamphlets like Abbie Hoffman's "Fuck the System," a solar heater, new CATALOG suggestions. We made it at the Store.

About this time Tom Duckworth joined the scene. He lived in a truck with Connie and their kids and soon had a place to park at Ortega. His dream was to really do a travelling truck store. In March we gave him a shake-down cruise to New Mexico when the Whole Store caravanned to ALLOY (p. 111). If I had to point at one thing that contains what the CATALOG is about, I'd have to say it was ALLOY. We put it in the March Supplement, along with how much the Supplement cost to make, which Steve Baer had suggested at ALLOY. A good practice. We've never regretted it.

When we started the CATALOG I imagined that it would be a month of work, then an easy month to travel around and get the news, then a month of work, then... but it wasn't working out like that. None of us knew how to run a store and we were learning the hard way. We couldn't seem to find a mailing house that would do an even half-decent job of serving the subscribers. We had to try three places, each at big expense.

Our hassle with the Post Office, which continues to this very day, was in its surreal beginnings. (We're a periodical, in every spiritual and legal sense. Periodicals are mailed Second Class, a faster, surer, and cheaper service than Third Class, which is Junk Mail. The classifications man in San Francisco said, "It says Catalog right here on the cover. Catalogs go Third Class." Dick Raymond cleared his throat, "The Rolling Stone," he said, "is not a stone." Through endless appeals the thing has ambled, letters to our Congressman Pete McCloskey, rulings, and re-rulings, to current result: We have to send this LAST CATALOG to you Third Class. When a mail truck gets stuck in the mud, Third Class is what they throw under the wheels.)

(continued)



THURSDAY: PHONE CALL

By morning, though, D.R. was thoroughly animated again, restless and filled with an energy that just knew there'd be a letter for him in the mail that day. He felt it so strongly he couldn't get his mind on any work he tried around the place. At ten thirty he gave up trying and took off half-running down the hill to the store. And sure enough, waiting at the post office was a letter from the Anaheim Flash.

Divine Right,

1. Man, you have blown me out.
2. The telephone is more civilized than letters.
3. Letter-writing closes up my centers.
4. Estelle has been at Angel's place the last couple of weeks.
5. She may not be there now.
6. But I sent your letter on to Angel's place anyhow.
7. That's all I know.
8. Here's 200 bucks.
9. Don't spend it all in one place.
10. And for Christ's sake, use the phone next time.

(signed) A. Flash, Esquire

Right on, said D.R. to himself.

(continued)

History (continued)

About this time Lois and I started living in the store. Joe and Annie and I, with editorial help from Lloyd Kahn, did the Spring 69 CATALOG production amid the busy din of the store, a bad mistake. The CATALOG was twice as big and a dollar cheaper. To clear my head after production I hitchhiked to New Mexico for what turned out to be the Great Bus Race (p 245). Joe and Annie also headed for the desert, pending rendezvous in Albuquerque for the July Supplement production.

You should know that all this time Portola Institute was going through continual interesting changes that someone else is going to have to write about. Dick Raymond did one especially nice thing for us: he protected us from the vicissitudes.

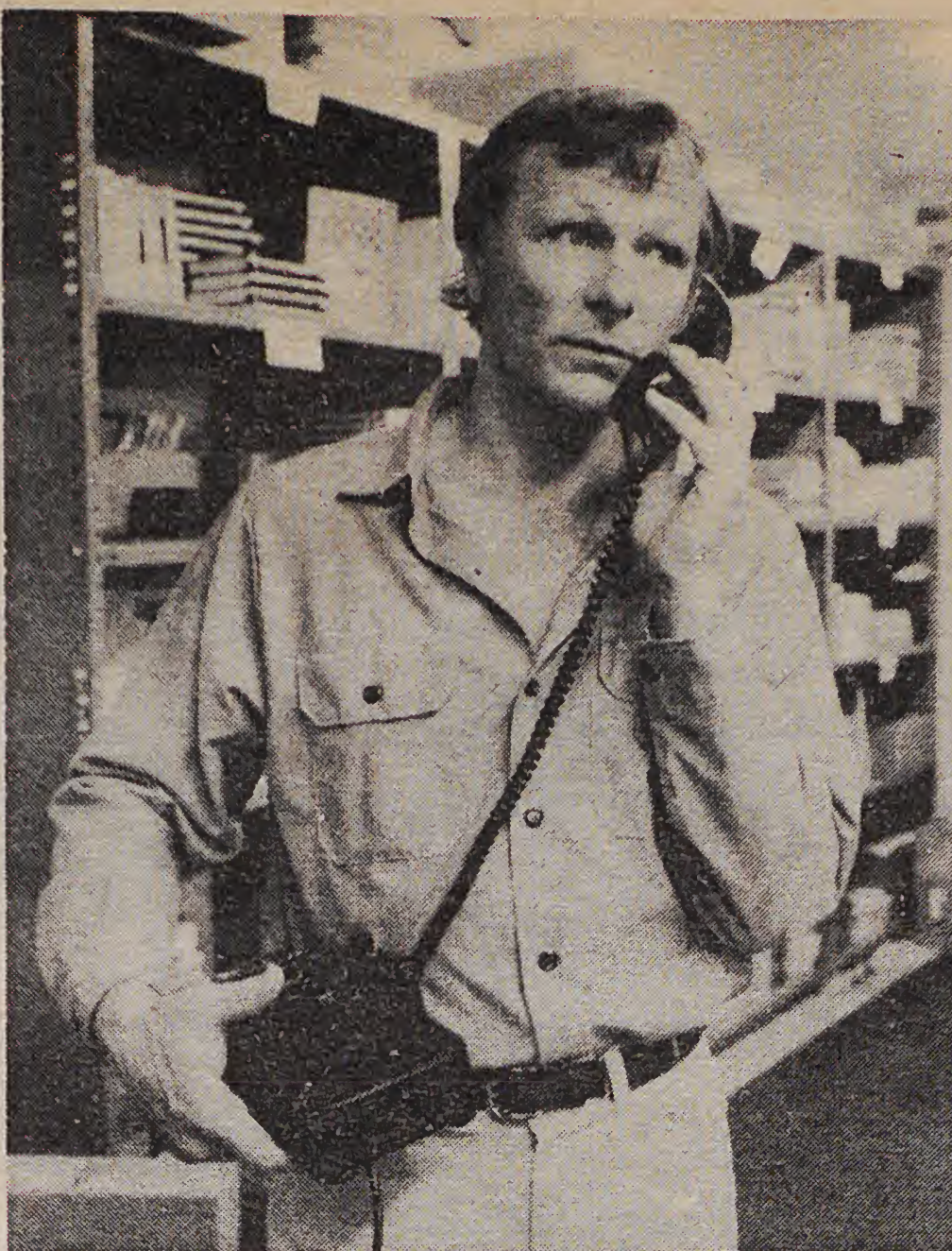
Store and mailorder business was gradually picking up, so we hired Hal Hershey, a friend of the Duckworths who had worked in bookstores. We also hired Diana Shugart, a close buddy of Lois' and mine. At the store we had a chart on the wall that showed our income and expenses for each month. The income was gradually catching up.

While we were having a good July production at Steve and Holly Baer's house in Albuquerque, Hal and Diana were starting to face a heavy current in Menlo Park ("52 subscriptions today!"). Philip Morrison had written kindly of us in the June 69 Scientific American. We were being mentioned in a lot of underground papers such as the East Village Other. And then Nicholas von Hoffman wrote a full piece on the CATALOG that got syndicated all over the U.S. We were caught. We were famous.

(One interesting note. Of all the press notices we eventually got, from Time and Vogue to Hotch!— in Germany— to the big article in Esquire, nothing had the business impact of one tiny mention in "Uncle Ben Sez" in the Detroit Free Press, where some reader asked, "How do we start a farm?" and Uncle Ben printed our address. We got hundreds and hundreds of subscriptions from that.)

Hal and Diana hired more people. Deposits at the bank were more frequent: the bank officers got more polite.

In September Joe and I returned to Ortega garage to work on the September Supplement. Annie had stayed on at Lama, so we hired a Kelly Girl to do the typing. As I was driving up the hill to work one day it suddenly hit me that I didn't want to. Instead of golden opportunity the publication was becoming a grim chore. I considered the alternatives of taking my medicine like a good boy or setting about passing on my job to somebody else. I'm sure I



Richard Raymond, President of Portola Institute

sighed unhappily. And then this other notion glimmered. Keep the job, finish the original assignment, and then stop. Stop a success and see what happens. Experiment going as well as coming. We printed in the September 69 Supplement that we would cease publication with a big CATALOG in Spring 71.

Meanwhile business was still growing. The morning mail was a daily heavy Santa Claus bag. We hired Tracy McCallum, Peter Ratner, Mary McCabe (a bit of uptown glamour amid the Hair), and a guy named Fred Richardson who had amazing talent for handling the world's hardware. Bernie Sprock and Megan Raymond came in periodically to handle our increasing load of filing and flyer-mailing and other chores. We were having group lunch at the store by now, Lois and Diana dishing it up.

I actually thought I could fit LIFERAFT EARTH (p. 35) in between the September Supplement and the fall CATALOG. Setting up the event was even harder than production. Then starving for a week was no way to recuperate. Dumb.

I went from the LIFERAFT straight into Fall CATALOG production. We were late, so we had to do it in two weeks. Fred was going to take over the camera. We had a hot new typist, Cappy McClure. We had a big new Stat-King that wasn't worth it. Joe brought in his brother Jay to double our layout speed. We worked 80 hours a week. We got to the printer on time.

Then Christmas was on us like a cat on a mouse. Everybody was overloaded at the store. In January we had another burst of hiring, practically whoever came in the door. Les Rosen the book-keeping ex-Marine, John Clark, Russell Bass, Jerry Fihn, Alan Burton, Leslie Acoca, the booklover Laura Besserman. Pam Smith was cooking lunch. When Tracy left to Canada, Pam's husband JD came in as manager. JD instituted a fine addition to the Storefront—a Free Box ("take or leave"). Everybody should have one; they really get used.

About this time I went over some edge. Minor tasks became insurmountable obstacles. The thought of another production filled me with hopeless dread. I couldn't walk right. It was a nervous breakdown, garden variety. I'd never had one before so I thought I was dying, which stirred up a snowfury of phobias that took more than a year to disperse. I'm not happy to mention this, but it seems an important part of the bookkeeping we're doing here.

In retrospect what I particularly appreciate was Dick Raymond's help and comfort, which was none at all. He's an unusually merciful soul. He said out loud to Esquire, "You have to let people have their own nervous breakdowns." Correct. (continued)

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—SB

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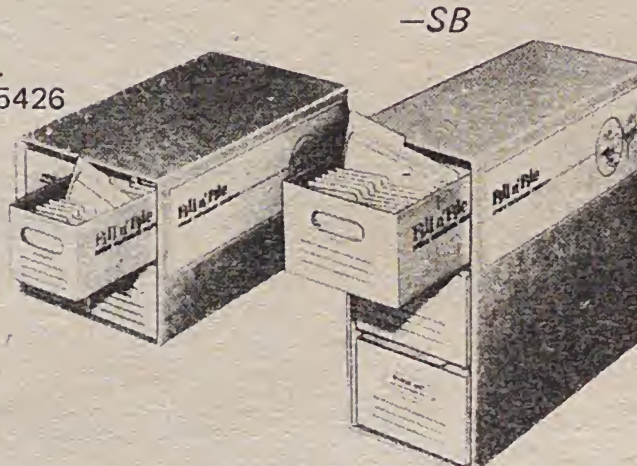
Sound Criticism

What in the Hell is the Big Idea, anyway, threatening to cease publication of the Whole Earth Catalog?!! Why, you characters have hardly even started! What if all the telephone companies suddenly

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—SB

decided to stop printing the yellow pages next year? What if Sweets suddenly decided they'd stop updating those huge catalogs each year or so? Where would we be? And don't put forth the argument that "Well, we'd probably be better off because somebody'd probably start a new Yellow Pages that would probably be better than the last ones..." because only You know how much Money, Time, Effort, Logistics, B.S., and Tears are required to compile and operate such an Information Processing Centre— and now that you've got the first touch of momentum in the Machine you're going to turn it off and like some child of itinerant interests create some new plaything to amuse yourselves and depress a lot of the rest of your followers because just as we get the hang of it and start Magnifying your Outer Ripples you'll Cop Out on us. If there was ever an Evil Plan, a commitment to Irresponsible Action, it's the decision to cease publication of the Catalog in 1971 which MR Brand had the audacity to suggest in a recent interview with TIME Magazine. What if Mother said after 3 months or so of Carrying The Weight: "Well, if Baby can't go it on his own from here I haven't been much use!" But as I hope You have noticed, really responsible mothers hang on for at least 9 months if not 15 years and then, knowing when to shut up, they do it.

I don't know how much it's coming through to you guys yet or not but your not just titillating the Folks down on The Farm— you've pioneered a whole new concept in Information selection and distribution: "The Catalog With A Soul." And as you might gather from your sales increases over the last few issues there are a hell of a lot of other eyes gawping your rags. For example, there isn't a single school (particularly those tied up old design schools) that isn't absolutely fertile ground for you to pitch your Circus on...! The kind of Design Mentality which in your format and attitude you've begun to succeed in showing is possible and enviable on nearly everybody's scale— and the kind of Gospel of Self-Reliance en famille you've preached is so goddamned vital you just can't give up without realizing the Full Implications, the Total Possibilities of the Little Bomb you've set off.

If you had the nerve to call it The Whole Earth Catalog, why the hell isn't it going to BE a WHOLE EARTH CATALOG— a World Source with a World circulation, a World Exposure, a World of Contributors (have you considered the prospect of a WEC in every U.S. Embassy as a start)— A World Institution; Sears and Roebuck did it with a much smaller heart— and you don't even have to stock the merchandise! Here I am in Soggy Olde England and I've sold the Catalog to the First Five people I've shown it to except they query "Where can I get these goodies in England?"

1971 is not the year for you to fold up; 1971 is the year for you to start a New Growth Phase— to show that your concern is even more generous, even more thought-out than you'd have us believe at the moment. How about that: twice a year an Expanding Universe in my mail box! What New Forms can the Whole Earth Catalog take on? Maybe a separate edition for each major category of information, sources, and items as reviewers and contributors expand the range. Or how about a Telex station at WEC so that the backlog of old information from old issues and reviews which will surely pile up at an astounding rate could be tapped by a subscriber anywhere in the World when he needs source material and, as well, reviewers might click in a review when the P.O. eventually proves too slow. The Supplements: in addition to the sort of Interface they are now, could continue to be sort of Reporters-At-Large for us Lookers and Builders but on a much Broader Scale, reaching beyond the Western United States and extending our knowledge of Process/ Ideas by connecting up with other Farmers of the World. (You know that the first European Conference on The Environment was just held in Strasbourg?)

You see, of course, it is just as important that you publish the Catalog as what you put in it— you are a vital Priority Distillery: Education, Tools, and Appliances for Self-Reliance and you document that very process of distillation thereby endorsing Design as one entire side of the Evolutionary Coin. Now, as never before, because of Extraordinary Devices, one man's Special Sight can be shared by many more who see a little better because of his efforts; in our struggle to become ever less Blind, all the Vehicles which bring the Possibilities of these Special Sightings to us are like much needed lenses or Aids: extra eyes and extra ears to help us make our Way in the Dark. As any designer knows— you cut off the Source, the Inspirator— and you cripple the Product, you trip up the Effort.

So, goddamnit, GROW UP. (or at least justify your suicide.)

Very Sincerely Yours,
Gregory Groth Jacobs
London



Every noon, volleyball at the store.

I jittered through the January 70 production and then asked Gurney Norman to handle March. He did, and with bells on. Guest editorship had come to Whole Earth. Joe Bonner left on the mystical road, and I was worried, but Hal Hershey more than filled his shoes on layout.

In January Fred built a volleyball court in back of the store. I was too fucked up to play on it for a while, which grieved me, because volleyball instantly became a valuable part of the store routine. We played two games after lunch every day. It improved our health, got us out in the weather, loosened our tensions, and — honest to God — built character.

Since we were playing on paid-for time, we naturally tried to stretch out the two games, so each day the players spontaneously arranged themselves into always different but equal teams. Lunch and volleyball kept us well acquainted. That, and the morning mail-opening scene. We had some newcomers — Mary Jo Morra, Soni Stoye the good cook, Austin Jenkins of good cheer.

On the Spring CATALOG we went up to 144 pages and lowered the price further to \$3. (Later a friend at Stanford Research Institute said he made the calculations one afternoon and figured out we would make the most money with a \$4 price tag. Or \$3.95, as they say.) A new face on Spring production was Steamboat, who seldom spoke but could draw volumes. (Tuesday's Child on p. 23 is his. So are the dragons.)

In July Lois and I left to see the world and Expo and the Bakers in Japan. My old (and favorite) employer Gordon Ashby took on the July Supplement and totally changed our layout ways.

JD, Nebraska's Marlon Brando, kept a strong crew busy at the Store and started gathering material for the Fall 70 CATALOG he was going to edit.

In September 70 Gurney came back from a summer in Kentucky with Wendell Berry and put out what came to be known as the Cracker issue of the Supplement. The BD-4 airplane kit we'd ordered started to arrive, and Fred and later Troll and Doug and Bob sawed and filed and puzzled and riveted it in the back room.

Don Gerrard had left Book People and among his other projects was trying to find a big distributor for the LAST CATALOG. We wanted a contract by Christmas. Nobody in New York seemed very interested.

There were strong family feelings in the Store by now and a desire to do something else together. A restiveness. When the teacher's lab at Ortega finally failed and quit, JD and I pressed to get it as a home for most of the Truck Store staff, a commune. Idealism

filled the air. It was never a very successful commune; it was a plenty educational one.

As Fall production went on up the hill in the garage there were new laborers in the store. Herald Hoyt, Dudley DeZonia, Francine Slate, Terry Gunesch, Diane Erickson. People's children were in the store more often now. Marilyn's kids, Francine's, Diane's, Pam's. I was buried in the back office starting the long haul toward the LAST CATALOG.

At Christmas there were memorable parties.

In January 71 some of us safaried to a remote unnamed desert hot springs for an adventurous Supplement production.

Don Gerrard had gotten good offers from Dutton and Random House for distribution of the LAST CATALOG. We decided to go with Random.

I asked Richard Brautigan, Ken Kesey, and Paul Krassner if any of them would like to edit the March Supplement. Brautigan said he was already involved in a quaint project, writing a novel. Kesey said he would edit if Krassner would, and new levels of offense and tooldom were leveled at our readers.

The LAST CATALOG you know about.

A lot of other stuff happened too, ask anybody who was there. Ask Bernie Sproch to show you his Whole Earth stamp collection. It's quite a collection.

Fame

I/we've been subject to some, and you're partially responsible, so I thought you ought to know a little about it. Everything bad you've heard about fame is quite true. It can throw a personality into positive feedback, where audience demands drive his character past caricature and off the deep end. Its over-rewards can jade a palate permanently. It wakes you up in the middle of the night with phone calls from whining strangers.

Worst of all is the classic bind of the successful do-gooder. If you do good well, your opportunities to do more increase, as your stamina to do any decreases. You should relax, yes you should, relax, with guilt yammering in your ear. FUCK EM ALL! is no answer either.

Some think they're strong, some think they're smart, Like butterflies they're pulled apart. America can break your heart. You don't know all, sir, you don't know all.

W. H. Auden

Krassner is right to note that celebrityhood is mainly a matter of convenience for people. There's no reason to take it personally.

I will say a couple of good words for fame. It accelerates access if you want access. You can hang around with famous people, which is fun sometimes. Your credit is good with strangers, it's never hard to meet people. It's usually easy to find work, make some money. If you've withstood fame there's some things you're strong at that you might not be otherwise.

The main problem with fame, or any kind of success, is the insulation it packs around you. You don't get all those little course-correcting signals from the universe. In part they're drowned out by all the people telling you what they think and what you ought to think. Also the signals just can't prick you; when a red danger light goes on, you can simply bribe the machine until the light goes off, and the danger grows unheeded.

The voices that you need to hear, whisper, slowly and infrequently. The only way to hear them is listen. Gaze at something until it's nothing. And then at nothing until it's something.

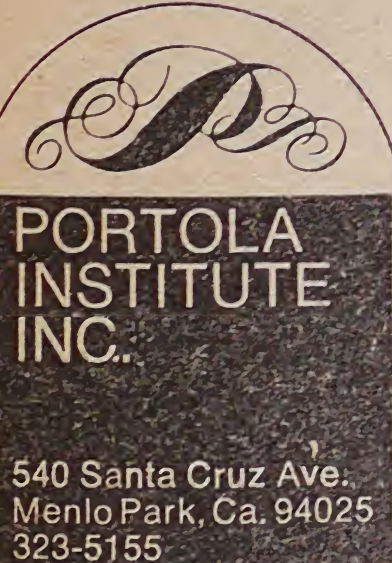
There's a difference between intention driving us on, and mystery pulling us on. Mystery will always educate and correct. Intention can go off the end of its own limb.

If it's all right with you, I'm going back to the tree. We get asked a lot, "What's in the future for you folks," as if we knew. Well, let's see. We'll clean up the garage and sell the production equipment, maybe to Kesey who wants to start a travelling magazine called Spit in the Ocean. Us out-of-work production people will draw our two weeks severance pay. We'll keep the Truck Store going in Menlo Park, and maybe try some new things with it in relation to Portola Institute. We'll have our DEMISE party that Scott Beach has set up at the Exploratorium in San Francisco. We'll do some travelling. We'll take a ride on Patchen's coda:

Pause.

And begin again.

—SB
May 31, 1971



Portola Institute was established in 1966 as a non-profit corporation to encourage, organize, and conduct innovative educational projects. The Institute relies for support on private foundations and public agencies, to whom specific project proposals are submitted.

Because Portola Institute is a private organization with no need to produce profits or guarantee "success", it can experiment with new and unusual educational projects that would be difficult to administer within more structured organizations. For this reason the staff and facilities of the Institute are deliberately kept small and flexible.

Within its framework a wide variety of projects dealing with innovative education can be created as people with ideas are able to interest people with funds. New projects are always being considered, both within the existing divisions and programs, and within as yet unexplored realms of the learning experience.

Whole Earth Truck Store and Catalog is one division of Portola Institute. Other current activities include:

- Briarpatch Review
- Alternative Economics
- Right Livelihood, including a special 3 yr. program in industrial democracy and education

Whole Earth Truck Store



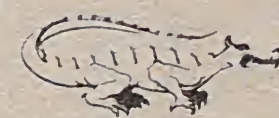
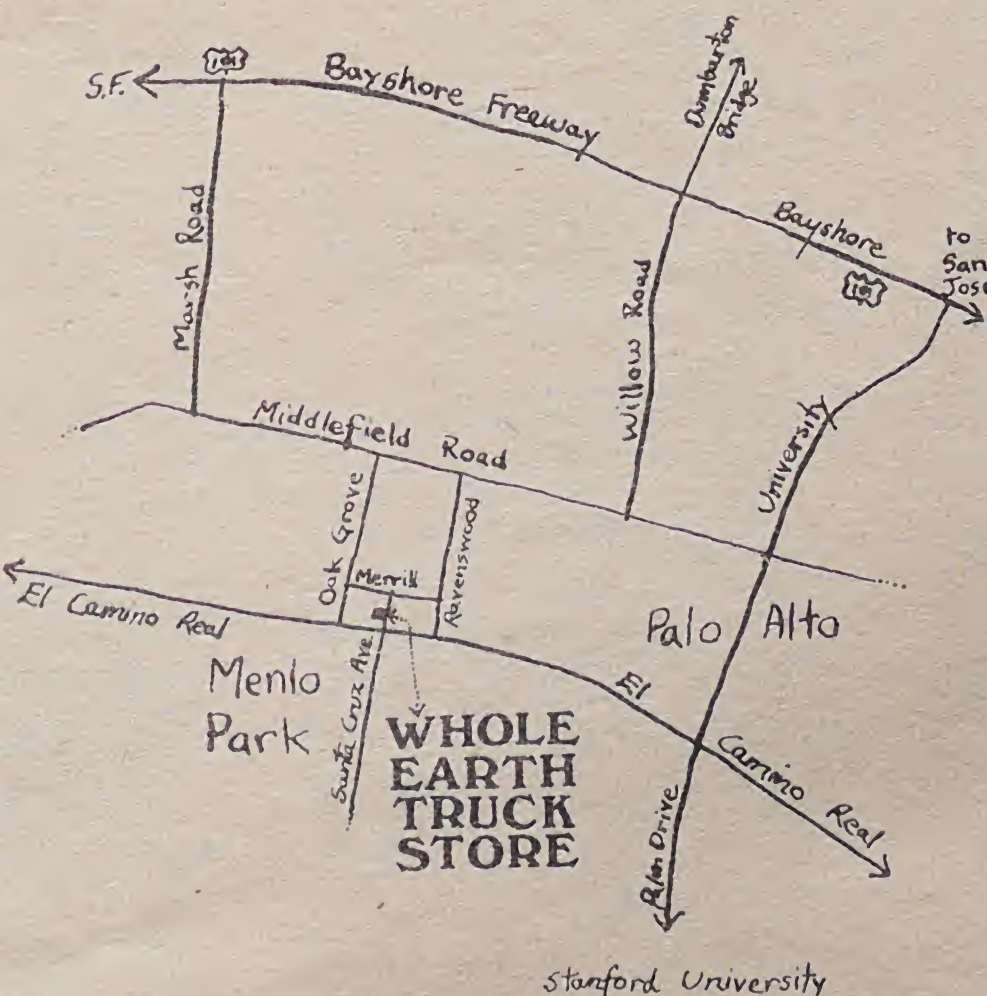
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And he left the store and the people there and went around to Roxie's house to place a collect call to the Flash in California.

"Val-low?"

"Flash, this is D.R."

"Stop right there," said the Flash. "Before you say another word, I want you to tell me a phone number where I can call you. I would of called you days ago . . ."

"Listen, man, have you heard from Estelle yet?"

"Tell me your phone number and I'll answer that question."

D.R. told the Flash Leonard's phone number. There was a little silence while he wrote it down.

"That's better," said the Flash. "People might as well be lost in outer space without a phone number. Estelle's in San Francisco."

"She's where?"

"She's with these friends of Angel's in the mountains, south of San Francisco. Down toward Santa Cruz."

"What the hell's she doing in San Francisco?"

"What are you doing in Kentucky?" asked the Flash. "What am I doing in Anaheim? It shifts, friend. It shifts and moves around. You should know."

"But San Francisco . . ."

"She's not in San Francisco," said the Flash. "She's south of there . . ."

"Did Angel tell you that?" D.R. asked. "When did you talk to Angel?"

"Yesterday, the day before yesterday, and about a week ago. I would of called you if I'd had your number. Always have a telephone number, D.R. It facilitates communication."

"So go on with it. What did Angel say?"

"She said Estelle had split. She said Estelle stayed with them two weeks, and day before yesterday took off, hitch-hiking south. Angel told her to stop off and stay a few days with these friends of hers who live in this dome in the mountains. Estelle said she'd probably do that, and if she did, then we can find her."

"What about my letter?"

"It got there the day Estelle left. Angel read it, and that's why she called me."

"I'm sorry she's hitch-hiking," said D.R.

"Angel said that was what she wanted to do. Besides that, she was broke."

"Oh shit. What else did she say? Did she say how she was, how she felt?"

"She's kind of down, I think. I'm not supposed to tell you that, so don't tell Angel I told you. She's already convinced you're a rat. I don't want her to think I'm one too."

"Jesus. Did she say what was wrong? Did she say . . ."

"No. But listen; don't sweat it. The Anaheim Flash is swinging into action. If my little scheme works out, you'll be talking to Estelle this afternoon."

"You going to call her? Can I call her?"

"I'm going to set it up. There's no phone in this dome she's supposed to be visiting. But I know a guy up there, in Menlo Park, and he'll fetch her to a phone if I ask him to. Then you guys can hate each other voice to voice, or groove on each other, or whatever weird thing it is you all are trying to get on. What the hell is going on, if I may ask?"

D.R. grinned into the telephone. "I've started a new corporation," he said.

(continued)